

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AF

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: KABUL 7332

SUMMARY: VARIOUS SIGNALS SUGGEST THAT GOA LIKELY TO WANT TO REDUCE OR POSSIBLY EVENTUALLY ELIMINATE PC PROGRAMS, AT LEAST OUTSIDE OF KABUL. HOWEVER, NO RPT NO PRECIPITATE CONCLUSIONS SHOULD BE DRAWN YET BY PC/W WHICH COULD PRODUCE "SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY." PRESIDENT DAOUD PLANS DISCUSS PC FUTURE HERE WITH AMBASSADOR ELIOT AFTER HIS ARRIVAL. END SUMMARY.

1. PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR GUYER IS CURRENTLY IN WASHINGTON ON CONSULTATION AND WILL BE DISCUSSING VARIOUS QUESTIONS CONCERNING FUTURE PC PROGRAMMING. HE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALLUDE TO A VARIETY OF SIGNALS WE HAVE PICKED UP IN PAST TWO WEEKS WHICH SUGGEST THAT GOA MAY NOT WISH TO CONTINUE PC IN AFGHANISTAN, AT LEAST NOT IN NUMBERS AND ON SCALE OF PRESENT PROGRAMS. THESE SIGNALS ARE AS YET PRELIMINARY AND IT IS, I BELIEVE, ESSENTIAL THAT PC/W NOT JUMP TO PREMATURE CONCLUSIONS, CURTAIL PLANS FOR FUTURE RECRUITMENT, AND PRODUCE "SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY."

2. GUYER TELLS ME THAT MAJORE PROGRAMMING DECISIONS FOR NEXT SUMMER DO NOT HAVE TO BE MADE UNTIL ABOUT THE FIRST OF THE YEAR. WELL

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BEFORE THAT TIME, AMBASSADOR ELIOT WILL HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY REACH

A FIRMER CONCLUSION ABOUT FUTURE POLITICAL VIABILITY OF PEACE CORPS EFFORTS HERE. AS MANY ISSUES AS POSSIBLE SHOULD BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL DECEMBER.

3. SIGNALS HAVE COME THROUGH VARIOUS CHANNELS. I MET WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION PAZHWAK OCTOBER 11, ONLY A FEW DAYS AFTER GUYER HAD WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS WHOLLY POSITIVE DECISION WITH PAZHWAK ON PC ROLE WITH THAT MINISTRY. IN CONTRAST, PAZHWAK TOLD ME THAT HE PLANNED REDUCE GRADUALLY NUMBER OF PC VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH HIS MINISTRY, PARTICULARLY IN ENGLISH TEACHING, AND TO PHASE OUT VOLUNTEER ROLE OVER NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS. WHEN PRESSED, HE SAID HE WANTED TO REDUCE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER ENGLISH TEACHERS BY 20 TO 25 IN NEAR FUTURE. HE STRESSED HIS MOTIVE WAS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUALIFIED AFGHANS, NOT RPT NOT ANY POLITICAL CONCERN. HE SAID REDUCTIONS WOULD BE MADE BOTH IN PROVINCES AND IN KABUL. HE ALSO INSISTED HIS DECISION WAS NOT ANY REFLECTION OF A GENERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARD PC, AND THAT IN FACT HE MIGHT WELL FIND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PC VOLUNTEERS IN OTHER PARTS OF HIS MINISTRY.

4. THE SAME WEEK THERE WAS A SUDDEN REVERSAL OF FIELD IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH CONCERNING THE TB TRAINING PROJECT. THE NEW SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE MINISTER, DR. SAFI, ABRUPTLY TOLD KUMOREK THAT THOSE 15 TB PCV'S WHO HAD JUST COMPLETED TRAINING HERE WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE PERMITTED TO GO TO THE PROVINCES TO TAKE UP THEIR WORK BUT RATHER WOULD BE REASSIGNED TO HOSPITAL DUTIES IN KABUL. HE SAID THAT THE LETTER AGREEMENT FOR THE TB PROJECT SIGNED WITH THE PREVIOUS REGIME WAS "OF COURSE NULL AND VOID." HE ALSO SAID THAT THOSE SIX TB VOLUNTEERS FROM A PREVIOUS CYCLE NOW IN THE PROVINCES WOULD BE RECALLED TO KABUL AS WELL. REPEATED DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM FAILED TO SHAKE HIS POSITION. WE HAVE INFORMATION WHICH SUGGESTS THAT SAFI IS A SELF-AVOWED EXTREME PARCHAMIST AND HAS CALLED HIMSELF A COMMUNIST, HIS ACTIONS MIGHT BE EXPLAINED AS INDIVIDUAL BIAS, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. HOWEVER, THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT HE IS EXTREMELY CLOSE TO THE HEALTH MINISTER AND HIS DECISION SEEMS TO FIT A BROADER GOVERNMENT PATTERN WHICH IS JUST EMERGING.

5. MOST OMINOUS SIGNAL CAME FROM PRESIDENT DAOUD. IN MY MEETING WITH HIM OCTOBER 13, I RAISED THE ABOVE TWO EXAMPLES IN A GENERAL WAY AND ASKED IN EFFECT FOR A REAFFIRMATION FROM HIM THAT A CON-

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TINUATION OF PC PROGRAMS WOULD BE DESIRED BY HIS REGIME. HE FIRST REPLIED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE THIS ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR ELIOT IN A COMPLETELY "SINCERE AND FRANK MANNER," "SO THAT THERE WILL BE NO MISUNDERSTANDING." I REPLIED THAT OF COURSE WE COULD CERTAINLY LEAVE IT UNTIL THE AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL BUT THAT WE HAD CERTAIN PROGRAMMING DECISIONS WHICH NEEDED TO BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS NEXT YEAR. ANY PRELIMINARY INDICATION OF HIS THINKING WOULD BE HELPFUL TO ME. HE

THEN REPLIED WITH TWO POINTS. FIRST HE SAID "WE HAVE MANY YOUNG WELL-EDUCATED AFGHAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED AND WHO COULD DO JOBS WHICH PCV'S ARE NOW DOING." THEREFORE, HE SAID, "OUR NEED FOR CERTAIN VOLUNTEERS WILL STOP." AND SECOND "QUITE FRANKLY, THERE HAS BEEN AND IS INTERFERENCE IN OUR AFFAIRS BY PCV'S AND A POKING OF NOSES INTO BUSINESS." I REPLIED THAT IF THIS WERE TRUE IT WOULD OF COURSE BE COMPLETELY CONTRARY TO THEIR INSTRUCTIONS. THE PCV'S, I SAID, WERE HERE ONLY FOR TWO THINGS, TO DO THE JOB ASSIGNED TO THEM BY THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT, AND TO MAKE FRIENDS ON A PERSONAL BASIS WITH AFGHAN CITIZENS. IF THEY WENT BEYOND THESE ACTIVITIES INTO POLITICAL MATTERS, WE WOULD, OF COURSE, REMOVE THEM AT THE GOA'S REQUEST. DAOUD THEN SAID HE WOULD SUPPLY ME WITH NAMES OF PCV'S WHO HAD BEHAVED IN AN UNACCEPTABLE FASHION. HE OBVIOUSLY DID NOT WISH TO GO FURTHER INTO THE SUBJECT AT THAT TIME. (I HAVE NOT PRESSED FOR THE NAMES, AND WILL MERELY WAIT TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY FOLLOW UP TO THIS DISCUSSION FROM THE AFGHAN SIDE.

6. OUR PRELIMINARY INTERPRETATION OF THESE VARIOUS SIGNALS IS THAT IF DAOUD REMAINS IN POWER, SOME PC PROGRAMS MAY VERY WELL CONTINUE HERE. BUT IN LINE WITH THE OVERALL GOA PREOCCUPATION WITH TIGHTER CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE OF FOREIGNERS, WE ANTICIPATE THAT PC PROJECTS IN THE PROVINCES WILL RAPIDLY BE SQUEEZED OUT TO A LARGE EXTENT AND THAT A REDUCED OVERALL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS MAY HAVE TO BE CONCENTRATED IN KABUL. WHILE THIS WOULD OF COURSE BE A VERY UNDESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE PC'S MISSION AND OF COLUNTEER JOB SATISFACTION, REALISTICALLY IT MAY WELL BECOME INEVITABLE.

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